

HISTORIC RESOURCES OF DALLAS COUNTY  
DALLAS COUNTY, ARKANSAS

ARKANSAS HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROGRAM

Survey Number DA-29

Owner First Presbyterian Church  
The Session

Property Name First Presbyterian Church  
AR 798

Address P. O. Box 697

Location Fordyce

Fordyce, AR 71742

Significant Date/s 1912

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

The First Presbyterian Church of Fordyce is an outstanding example of the application of the Gothic Revival to a modest early twentieth century church. Built of buff brick, this one story structure has an irregular plan and asymmetrical elevations, the focal point of which are the three two-story towers that provide this building with a vertical emphasis. The main entrances to the church are located in the three towers, each of which is buttressed and has stone detailing.

While a pyramidal roof covers the sanctuary area, a hipped roof extends at a right angle to the rear of the building. A gabled frontispiece extends several feet from the front facade and false-fronted corbie gables, echoing the embattled tower parapets, are found on the east and west end elevations. An interior chimney, since removed, was an original feature. Decorative brick stringcourses embellish each facade just above the foundation. All windows in the church are of stained glass, most likely of German origin, with jack arches of vertical stretchers, brick label mouldings and stone sills. With the exception of a tower window and two tripartite windows, all windows in the building are double sash.

The front elevation (south) consists of a gabled frontispiece flanked by two square crenellated towers. Projecting several feet from the wall, the frontispiece has a tripartite transomed Gothic arched window. The bell tower, located at the east corner of the front facade extends several feet further from the wall than does the frontispiece. This tower has louvered and glass fenestrations on each of its four sides and entrances to the sanctuary. A double sash window is located to the left of the frontispiece. To the left of this window is the west tower, shorter than the bell tower, which is flanked on the left by two double sash windows. Embellishing the upper portion of this tower is a long narrow window. Each tower buttress has a flat capstone and flat stone coping finishes the parapet. On each side of the towers, flat stone panels are positioned in the brickwork of the center merlon.

The east elevation, with the bell tower at the south corner, has a falsefronted gable with a tripartite window almost identical to the window found on the front elevation. A tower, much like the west tower on the front of the building, is also found on the east facade and provides an entrance to Sunday School rooms and offices. A canopy-covered entrance to the full basement and an attached carport are located on the west end elevation. Alterations to the building are few. The

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stained glass skylights were covered over the last time the church was re-roofed. In 1960 a number of tie-rods were added to stabilize each wall and brickwork was relaid in areas where serious shifting had occurred. The interior, which is highlighted by beautiful woodwork and an unusual plan, is unchanged.

#### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The First Presbyterian Church of Fordyce is important both for the history of its congregation and the significance of its talented designer. The First Presbyterian Church was organized in August, 1883, at which time a church bell was presented to the congregation by Colonel Fordyce of St. Louis, Missouri, as it was the first church organized within the city limits of the new town named in his honor. Founded with only six charter members, the congregation had increased to 88 by 1899. The congregation first occupied a white frame building which stood at the corner of Third and Oak Streets. After selling this building to the Christian Church, the First Presbyterian congregation met in a brick building located at Fifth and Main Streets. The third and present church was built in 1912.

Designed by Reuben Harrison Hunt (1862-1937), a noted architect from Tennessee, the First Presbyterian Church is a well-preserved example of this important designer's ecclesiastical work. Considered one of Tennessee's most significant architects, Hunt was the subject of a thematic nomination to the National Register in 1979 prepared by the Tennessee Historic Commission. Hunt most frequently designed churches, educational and public buildings, often in the Gothic Revival style. Though he had little formal architectural training, he designed his first major project, the First Baptist Church in Chattanooga, at the age of 24. From that time on, Hunt designed numerous brick and stone churches throughout the South, of which the First Presbyterian Church is representative.

Acreage: less than 1

Quadrangle Name: Fordyce

Quadrangle Scale: 1:24000

UTM Reference: 15 554170/3741380

Verbal Boundary Description:

Block 3, Lots 1 and 2, Original city of Fordyce.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

9/14/83

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number

Page 1 of 3

Multiple Resource Area  
Thematic Group

dnr-11

Name Dallas County Multiple Resource Area  
State Arkansas

Nomination/Type of Review

Date/Signature

1. Amis House

Entered in the  
National Register

for Keeper

Melvin Byers 10/28/83

Attest

2. Atchley, Henry, House

Entered in the  
National Register

for Keeper

Melvin Byers 10/28/83

Attest

3. Brazeale Homestead

Substantive Review

Keeper

Beth Groover 10/28/83

Attest

4. Brewster House

Entered in the  
National Register

for Keeper

Melvin Byers 10/28/83

Attest

5. Butler-Matthews Homestead

Entered in the  
National Register

for Keeper

Melvin Byers 10/28/83

Attest

6. Dallas County Courthouse

Entered in the  
National Register

for Keeper

Melvin Byers 3/27/84

Attest

7. Elliott House

Entered in the  
National Register

for Keeper

Melvin Byers 3/27/84

Attest

8. Fielder House

Entered in the  
National Register

for Keeper

Melvin Byers 10/28/83

Attest

9. First Presbyterian Church

Substantive Review

Keeper

Beth Groover 10/28/83

Attest

10. First United Methodist Church

Entered in the  
National Register

for Keeper

Melvin Byers 10/28/83

Attest



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

**Substantive Review**

First Presbyterian Church (Dallas County MRA)  
Dallas County  
ARKANSAS

Working No. SEP 14 1983  
Fed. Reg. Date: 2-5-85  
Date Due: 10/13/83 - 10/29/83  
Action: ☒ ACCEPT 10/28/83  
☐ RETURN  
☐ REJECT  
Federal Agency: \_\_\_\_\_

- ☐ resubmission  
☐ nomination by person or local government  
☐ owner objection  
☐ appeal

Substantive Review: ☒ sample ☐ request ☐ appeal ☐ NR decision

Reviewer's comments:

*The First Presbyterian Church is architecturally significant locally as a good example of the Neo-Gothic style designed by noted Southern architect Reuben Harrison Hunt.*

Recom./Criteria Accept C  
Reviewer Bushong  
Discipline Historic  
Date 10/26/83  
\_\_\_\_ see continuation sheet

Nomination returned for: \_\_\_\_\_ technical corrections cited below  
\_\_\_\_\_ substantive reasons discussed below

1. Name

2. Location

3. Classification

| Category | Ownership          | Status     | Present Use |
|----------|--------------------|------------|-------------|
|          | Public Acquisition | Accessible |             |

4. Owner of Property

5. Location of Legal Description

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☐ no

7. Description

| Condition                          | Check one                             | Check one                                 |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> excellent | <input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated | <input type="checkbox"/> original site    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> good      | <input type="checkbox"/> ruins        | <input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> fair      | <input type="checkbox"/> unexposed    |   |
|                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> unaltered    |   |
|                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> altered      |   |

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

- ☐ summary paragraph  
☐ completeness  
☐ clarity  
☐ alterations/integrity  
☐ dates  
☐ boundary selection

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## 8. Significance

Period      Areas of Significance—Check and justify below

Specific dates

Builder/Architect

Statement of Significance (*in one paragraph*)

- ☐ summary paragraph
- ☐ completeness
- ☐ clarity
- ☐ applicable criteria
- ☐ justification of areas checked
- ☐ relating significance to the resource
- ☐ context
- ☐ relationship of integrity to significance
- ☐ justification of exception
- ☐ other

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

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## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property \_\_\_\_\_

Quadrangle name \_\_\_\_\_

UTM References

Verbal boundary description and justification

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## 11. Form Prepared By

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## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

\_\_\_\_ national      \_\_\_\_ state      \_\_\_\_ local

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title

date

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## 13. Other

- ☐ Maps
- ☐ Photographs
- ☐ Other

Questions concerning this nomination may be directed to \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_





DA-29  
First Presbyterian Church  
Alice Jones, photographer  
May 3, 1983  
Negative on file at the AHPP  
View from the South

Please refer to the map in the  
Multiple Property Cover Sheet  
for this property

Multiple Property Cover Sheet Reference Number: 64000025